

Turning the World Right-side Up: Study 4, Acts 5

Acts Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible answer. Where they cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: How important is honesty to God?

God Seeks Honesty Chapter 5:1-11

5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

⁹ Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

¹⁰ At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

This seems like an odd event to record here. It doesn't seem to fit. The church is on the move, people are coming to Christ and being saved. And then the momentum stops to tell the story about two church members who are killed for lying to God. When we understand it, however, it makes much more sense.

Firstly, what is the problem here? Was it that the Ananias and Sapphira did not give all their money to the church? Peter tells

Ananias that the property was his to do with what he wished. So the problem was not that he owned property, but that he lied about giving all the money to God. He lied to God. Not only this, but he and his wife conspired to lie to God. It was planned. Why do this? Most likely they wanted the reputation of being giving and spiritual without the risk. In other words, they wanted position and prestige in the church without having to exercise faith. They were pretending to be spiritual and relying on money rather than God.

We have a key Christian word: Confess. Confess comes from the word that means, "To say the same thing." The same thing as who? God. When we confess we say what God says. We are brutally honest, especially about ourselves. We are not putting on airs. We are not inflating ourselves or pretending to be better than we are. We are honest.

Most Christians experience the feeling that they are not good enough to bear the name of Christ. We can either accept the truth and confess that we are still sinners who battle the evil that continuously knocks at our door, and that we sometimes fail, or we can begin to lie to God, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to ourselves and put on a holy front, going through the motions and appearing much better than we are. We can fake it. This is what God hates and what He was dealing with in the early church. It is very important that we have people we can be completely, painfully honest with in our lives. People we trust implicitly. We need to develop a healthy honest distaste for our residual sinful habits and fleshly ways. But we cannot hide them, as Adam and Eve tried to do. We cannot hide from God.

Section 2: God's Power Manifested

¹²The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

What does the word, "Apostle" mean? An apostle is an authoritative representative. When you needed someone to stand in for you in an official capacity, to have your power of attorney, you hired an apostle. The 12 were the authoritative representatives of Jesus, with his authority and power. Where there was one, now there were 12. C. S. Lewis referred to Christianity as the good infection. It spreads like a virus, the first virus cell infecting a host and reproducing itself.

What an exciting time this was! With very little medical expertise, and most people seeing sickness as an overwhelming reality, the healing power of God coming through the Apostles would have been life altering. It would have the same impact as a discovery of a cure for cancer would in our day.

Notice as well that there were some tormented by impure spirits—demons. Just as we know that there are angels of God who serve Him as messengers and do His bidding, we also must never be ignorant that there are fallen angels who do the bidding of their master, Satan.

Section 3: The Apostles Persecuted Again

¹⁷ Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸ They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ²⁰ “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people all about this new life.”

²¹ At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. ²² But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, ²³ “We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” ²⁴ On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

²⁵ Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.” ²⁶ At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

²⁷ The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.”

²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³ When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. ³⁴ But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. ³⁵ Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what

you intend to do to these men. ³⁶Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. ³⁷After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered.³⁸ Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”

⁴⁰ His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

Digging Deeper: Look at verse 42

“Day after day”: Non-stop.

“In the temple courts”: Where the religious people gathered. These are people who knew the promises of God and were looking for the Messiah to come.

“From house to house”: Oikoses. In every age, the home has been the center of people’s lives. The Apostles spent time in people’s homes sharing with them and their 10-12 what God had done for them in the Death and Resurrection of Christ.

“Never stopped teaching”: Teaching applies to the mind. The Christians used the logic of the Old Testament and explained Christ in light of the promises of God (we have seen Peter do this a couple of times). Some think that when we become Christians we turn off our minds and shift to an emotional life. This is not so. God has made our minds to be used to their fullest. What does this mean for us that God has called us to have Christian minds? John Stott writes, “A ‘Christian Mind’ is described by Mr. Blamires as “a mind trained, informed, equipped to handle data of secular controversy within a framework of reference which is constructed of Christian presuppositions” presuppositions (for example) of the supernatural, of the pervasiveness of evil, of truth, authority and the value of the human person. The Christian thinker, he goes on, “challenges current prejudices...disturbs the complacent...obstructs the busy pragmatists...questions the very foundations of all about him...and is a nuisance.” *Your Mind Matters*, pg. 23

Never stopped proclaiming Good news: The Greek word here is

evangelize. They shared the “Good News.” Good news is what you shared when your army won a battle. The home city waited expectantly to hear whether they were going to be overrun by an invading army or if their forces had victory. The messenger bringing the good news was welcomed with cheers. This is what the Apostles are doing here. They are proclaiming that the battle has been won. God’s kingdom is victorious through Christ.

Jesus is the Messiah—Notice the present tense, Jesus IS the Messiah. Messiah means “anointed one.” Anointing was done by the pouring of oil on a person chosen by God, to symbolize the Spirit of God upon him. Jesus was the one promised throughout the Old Testament, the one with God’s Spirit. The one who all Israel had hoped for.

What have we learned?

There is a pattern in the Book of Acts for spreading the gospel: 1) God performs a miracle, 2) The miracle is explained in terms of the death/resurrection/ascension of Jesus and the pouring out of the Spirit, 3) people are invited to repent and be saved and filled with the Spirit. When God moves like this, there will be a reaction. The enemies of the faith will lash out. We will need to stand our ground with Christ. There is a missionary in Africa who continuously prays for God to show him who He wants to heal. When he does, the man prays and the sick person is healed. He then tells the person that in the evening there will be a meeting where he will explain the power that brought the healing. Many are saved. We can do the same thing. Start praying for God to show you who He wants to heal.

What this Means for Us

It is a very serious matter to lie to God. This should make up more wary of our frivolous words and commitments to God. We might tell God, “I’m going to read my Bible every day.” But our lives get busy and we are tired and we start missing a day here and there. Soon we have stopped reading all together. We have lied to God. It would have been far better if we had never made the promise. We need to be transparent and honest with God, admitting our faults and our sins, and giving out of a joyful heart.

We also see that the early church was a very exciting place to be. People were being healed left and right. The presence of God was on His people. This was stirring up the whole city and the surrounding regions. Is this true of our church? Now, let’s be clear. There is a very big difference between a slick service with all the bells and whistles, something that competes with the best show the world can produce, and the presence of God in His church. The presence of God is powerful and life changing. It satisfies us at the deepest level. It changes us from within. A slick service might be entertaining, but it will never be life changing.

It is when God is present and powerful in His church, when His spirit is allowed to pour forth gifts and fruits of His presence, when the fragrance of Christ is in His people and their relationships surpass that of acquaintance or friendship and they really become a family with a common Father, that we become a threat to the kingdom of darkness around us. When it is God who heals bodies, lives, marriages, and families, then the world and all of its methods feel assaulted. This is when the devil and his forces will rise up against the church. Let’s pray to be a church that threatens the darkness.

Acts 5 Questions Section 1: Read Acts 5:1-11

The believers understood that they were a family with God as their common Father. They saw their possessions as a means to give to others in their Christian family. Ananias and Sapphira were a married couple who wanted prestige in the church—they wanted to be known as givers—but did not want to pay the price. They decided to lie about their giving, declaring that they had given all the proceeds from a land sale, while they really held back some of the money for themselves. This was the sin—the lying to God. They both ended up dead. It is a very serious thing to falsify ourselves before God. We need to present ourselves before God in all sincerity, confessing what we really.

1. Did Ananias and Sapphira have to give all of their possessions? What do you think was their motive for saying they did?
2. What does this section tell us about being honest with God?

Section 2: Read Acts 5:12-16

Notice the great quantity of miracles being done in the Jerusalem church. People were even bringing out their sick so that Peter's shadow might fall on them to heal them. The power of God was present. We need to ask ourselves where this power is today. God is not less strong nor His kingdom less powerful. God is not less interested in showing His kingdom to save the lost. Nor can we say that this was just something reserved for the apostles. There were others in the early church who healed and experienced the power of God. Again, we must be careful here. The power of God is not something to chase after. We must always chase after one thing—God Himself. We must live lives of worship and prayer and consuming His Word. We must be His and listen for His voice. But as

we do this, He may lead us to pray for the sick because He wants to show His glory in them (see John 9). We must be ready.

1. Can you imagine what it would have been like to be in the church at Jerusalem? Is this what the church is like today? Why or why not? What could we do to allow God to recreate the New Testament church experience here in our midst?

Section 3: 17-42

When God's presence and power are in His people, there will be a reaction from the enemies of the truth. In the midst of this the Apostles held firm to their God and His message of deliverance.

1. Notice that when something is of God it cannot be extinguished. What is the difference between Christian religion (doing the Christian routine) and a vibrant relationship with God through Christ? How does one maintain this relationship?
2. Have you ever thought that you might be persecuted (beaten, tortured, or killed) for your faith in Christ? There are people around the world today who are persecuted for their faith. How can we prepare ourselves for this possibility?
3. What kind of negative reactions are possible in your life right now because you are in a growing vibrant relationship with God? What could you lose now for Christ's sake?